Petersburg and Central Committees of both factions. The meeting was in a classroom of the Conservatory of Music. The representative of the Central Committee who came to bring us its decision was visibly embarrassed and meekly invited us to ask questions. Someone said, "We have only one question. For a month, following your instructions, we have called people to armed revolt. Where are our arms?"

"We have given you all we have," the committeeman replied.

"Thirty Brownings for self-defense? You are making fools of us. Where are the arms?"

"We have none. We hoped to get some, but the shipment was intercepted."

"Can we get weapons through the military organizations?"

"No. All the units with which we have connections have been disarmed."

"What about munitions shops?"

"The police have confiscated all their supply."

We had no further questions. One of us expressed the feelings of the group: "You have incited us and led us to incite others. You are responsible for a monstrous crime."

After a long silence, the committeeman said quietly, "The Central Committee realizes that the strike is lost. Mass arrests will probably begin tomorrow. Persons who spoke openly in the meetings will be taken first. The Central Committee has therefore decided to regroup all party workers, shifting everyone who has worked in St. Petersburg to the provinces. You are asked to alter your identity papers and, if possible, your appearance, and not to appear at any more public meetings."

Then all hell broke loose. I summarized the feelings of our group. "Give the Central Committee our answer. We consider your proposal cowardly and cynical, and a disgrace to the party. None of us will desert. We will keep on with our work. Is this unanimous, comrades?"

It was unanimous, indeed. The committeeman shrank like a deflated balloon.

"I shall transmit your decision," he mumbled. "The Central Committee does not insist. . . . Actually, this was just a tentative suggestion. . . . Since you feel this way . . ."

We left the dark and empty Conservatory after midnight. The broad plaza in front of the building was deserted. Vague voices came from the distance. The clouds reflected invisible bonfires. The night was chilly. . . . Comrades in battle and defeat, we shook hands and went our separate ways. No arrangement was made to